

Changes from 8/24: added #8 as approved; revised #3 to incorporate suggestions

1. The Town Manager shall develop specific recommendations for consideration by the Select Board to address the revenue crisis, including the generation of new revenue; reducing expenses through efficiencies in Town structure and service delivery; negotiating contracts through the collective bargaining process that are reflective of the community's capability and willingness to support; and pursuit of an increased economic development profile to increase the tax base and reduce the burden on residential property taxpayers.
2. The Town Manager shall continue to strengthen relationships with UMass and the Colleges, and to actively engage community groups.
3. The Town Manager shall assess the state of morale among staff, the Town's most valuable resource. The Town Manager shall develop and implement a plan to improve morale, which shall include more effective communication as one of its components; and shall keep the Select Board informed about this work and its progress.
4. The Town Manager shall assess the functioning of the Human Resources Department and the Town's Human Resources needs. The Town Manager shall inform the Select Board of his findings, and of his plans to ensure that the organization's needs are fully met.
5. The Town Manager shall continue to work closely with the Select Board by helping the Select Board to become more informed; responding to and initiating improved communication efforts; allowing the Select Board more opportunity to provide feedback on policy/practice initiatives and changes before implementation; and involving the Select Board in the determination of collective bargaining strategies.
6. The Town Manager shall create a workplace culture of receptivity to new ideas, in which staff at all levels are expected and encouraged to offer suggestions for improving the efficiency of service provision and resource utilization within and across departments. The Town Manager shall inform the Select Board about the variety of ways such suggestions are being encouraged, collected, considered and implemented. These will include specific mechanisms for feedback collection, as well as how the philosophy and message of encouraging feedback is being communicated to staff.
7. The Town Manager shall continue efforts to research and propose ways to collect "customer satisfaction" feedback and suggestions from the public, regarding interactions with staff and departments, and the process of obtaining services and assistance.
8. The Town Manager shall assess Town-owned buildings regarding their current use, and anticipated future benefit and liability. He will make recommendations on whether or not it is in the Town's best interest to maintain ownership of each one. If any recommendations are to not maintain ownership, he will suggest how best to proceed.

Town of



AMHERST *Massachusetts*

Town Hall
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002

Office of the Town Manager
Phone: (413) 259-3002
Fax: (413)-259-2405
Email: townmanager@amherstma.gov

AMHERST SELECT BOARD MEETING

September 14, 2009

New Business

To: Stephanie O'Keeffe, Chair of the Amherst Select Board
Members of the Amherst Select Board

From: Laurence Shaffer, Town Manager

Re: Response to 2009 Town Manager Performance Evaluation

Date: September 10, 2009

I would like to extend my deepest appreciation to the Select Board for its kind words and suggestions relative to the 2009 Town Manager Performance Evaluation. I was very pleased with the evaluation. The performance evaluation was fair and honest.

I have worked very hard over the last year under less than ideal conditions. Given the fiscal challenges facing the town and the changes that those challenges required, I was proud of my effort to creatively and boldly steer the town in a direction that provided comparable services with less resources. The Select Board accurately reflected my impression in its comments relative to fiscal management. I have successfully implemented techniques that have provided the Select Board and the community with important information relative to the condition of the town. That performance is outlined in the Select Board discussion of my relationship with the Select Board. Long range planning was given high marks by the Select Board with an emphasis upon the Economic Development Plan that I prepared. The Select Board also expressed its satisfaction with my efforts with community groups and the educational institutions. The Select Board expressed its concerns about employee morale and the lack of a collective bargaining agreement with the Firefighters' Union. I acknowledge that this is an important area that needs my further attention and stronger performance.

It is my intention going forward to work very hard on behalf of this wonderful community. I will bring energy, creativity and focus to the challenges confronting Amherst. I very much look forward to expanding upon the positive and productive relationship that exists between the Select Board and the Town Manager. Together, we can achieve the best for the community we love.

Town of



AMHERST *Massachusetts*

Town Hall
4 Boltwood Avenue
Amherst, MA 01002

SELECT BOARD
Phone: (413) 259-3001
Fax: (413) 259-2405
Email: selectboard@amherstma.gov

August 31, 2009

To: Larry Shaffer, Town Manager
From: Stephanie O'Keeffe, Chair
on behalf of the Select Board
RE: FY09 Performance Evaluation

The Select Board thanks you for another year of fine service to the Town of Amherst.

Attached you will find a composite evaluation form, pulling together results from the individual Select Board members' evaluation forms, in addition to each member's submission. The goal is to give you the feedback you need to help you do your job better: identifying areas where we feel your performance is strong, as well as those areas that we believe would benefit from more attention.

This is an inexact science, as each of us brings our own interpretation to the expectations and goals as described, as well to the definition of each rating. That kind of nuance, along with the individual comments, makes for interesting reading, but it is worth being mindful of that imprecision while doing so.

Most importantly, because the Select Board's authority is vested in the full body and not in individual members, it is the areas in which we have broad agreement that should inform and direct your work.

Thus, per each of the evaluation areas, these documents show:

Fiscal Management

The Select Board gives you very high marks for budget management and development, with particular appreciation due to this year's extremely challenging circumstances.

Relationship with the Board

The Select Board gives you very high marks for improving your communication with us and for keeping us well informed, at meetings and by phone calls and e-mail. It is interesting to note that "Implementation of Select Board Policy" has a majority of similar comments pointing to the ambiguity of that concept, suggesting we and you need to work together to define that better.

Long Range Planning

The Select Board gives you high marks for planning for future Town needs and for your economic development plan.

Staff and Personnel Relations

The Select Board's ratings for personnel management and morale issues are low. Improvement over last year is noted and appreciated, but the need for additional attention and improvement is indicated. Concerns expressed in comments by a majority include human resources effectiveness, some staff assignments, and the lack of resolution to the firefighters' contract. Appreciation is expressed in comments by a majority for your sensitivity in handling layoffs.

Community and Intergovernmental Relations

The Select Board gives you very high marks for gaining community support for new initiatives, and for your work with the university and colleges, other municipalities, and the media. For the performance goal about relationships with the university and colleges, and with community groups, you earned an "outstanding" from every Select Board member.

FY09 Performance Goals

The performance goals established for FY09 were incorporated into the appropriate sections of the evaluation form. (Seven of the eight goals were incorporated; the one related to creating a centralized process for recruiting and managing volunteers was inadvertently left out.) Fulfillment of five of the performance goals received high ratings:

- 96% Commendable or above for budget planning – FY09 Goal #1
- 100% Satisfactory or above, with 80% Commendable for working more closely with the Board – FY09 Goal #4
- 100% Satisfactory or above, with 80% Commendable or above for creating an economic development plan – FY09 Goal #5
- 100% Outstanding for strengthening relationships with the university and colleges, and engaging community groups – FY09 Goal #2
- 80% Satisfactory or above for collecting feedback and suggestions from the public – FY09 Goal #7

Fulfillment of the two goals related to staff issues received low ratings:

- 50% Satisfactory or above and 50% Needs Improvement for improving employee morale – FY09 Goal #3
- 50% Satisfactory and 50% Needs Improvement for collecting staff input – FY09 Goal #6

While 50% is not a majority, it is instructive that these ratings skew much lower than those of the other goals. If Satisfactory is considered the lowest acceptable rating, then the fact that 80% of the morale goal and 100% of the staff input goal rate as Satisfactory or below indicates concern.

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Overall, this evaluation demonstrates clearly that the Select Board has high regard and admiration for your management of the Town. We hope you will continue to perform at such high levels in each of these strong areas, and we look forward to improvement in the one area where that need is indicated.

Thank you for all your good work for our community.